

Win-Win!

In early 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, millions of people's lives changed unexpectedly, including Katerina in Montreal. This is her story...

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Part 1

My parish, St. John Fisher, is my second home. I start my day there with Mass and I often return in the afternoon to pray in the adoration chapel. In pre-pandemic times, we

were privileged to have the Blessed Sacrament exposed 18 hours every day. In a sense, the parish was my whole family's second home; my kids used to accompany me for daily Mass, our boys were altar servers, our girls sang in the choir, my husband Pavel was a lector and we all volunteered as much as we could.

Challenges and solutions

Our family, like all others, has of course met its challenges over the years. In the Lent of 2012, there was a lot on my plate. As he was recovering from a heart attack, Pavel lost his job; I also had health problems while homeschooling our four children. Then I attended my annual silent retreat and spent four days asking : "Lord, let me share doctrine". It would have been more logical making petitions for my family but, for some reason, I spent my retreat asking our Lord to make

me share doctrine. I remember coming home and telling my spiritual director about my experience and not understanding it. This was the time when Pope Benedict XVI announced the year of the Faith; I wanted to do my part because my Faith gives me so much joy, peace, and purpose; it was only natural to share it with others.

A couple of weeks later I was diagnosed with cancer and lost my job. It was a time of trial for our family but also a moment of an immense grace. At the end of the summer, a friend asked me if I would join her as part-time catechist at our parish. That was the beginning of my involvement, especially for sacramental preparation - First Communion, First Confession, and Confirmation. Always, I tried to stress the importance of developing a personal relationship with God.

At one point, we noticed that many families stopped attending Sunday Mass as soon as their children received Confirmation – as if they had graduated! So, we made it mandatory for parents to attend sacramental preparation classes together with their children. This sparked the interest of many of them for their faith, so I soon started evening classes for parents to approach a variety of topics in more depth. For example, I remember giving one talk on the ‘what, why, and how’ of Confession; we had a panel of volunteers sharing the challenges and joys of frequent confessions, and our pastor was available for confessions at the end of the evening.

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